

REMARKS OF  
CHARLES P. CABELL  
AT THE  
ELEVENTH ORIENTATION COURSE  
4 AUGUST 1953

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There is something a little unusual about this particular gathering which may have escaped your immediate attention. Gathered here in this auditorium today are members of the Agency representing all its parts as well as members of some of our cooperating agencies in the intelligence community. I say this is unusual because in your career with this Agency you will seldom have the opportunity of sitting down in one body with fellow CIA workers from the whole operation. If you will look at the people on your right and on your left, I will lay odds you will see faces that you will not see again during your entire experience with us. Now this is an unfortunate thing in a way, because it means that as an Agency, we can not always enjoy that comradeship which comes from continuous contact and interchange within a group, the size of this one. We are in fact compartmented, and however unfortunate it may be, this is inevitable in an essentially covert organization. There are two reasons for this, the latter of which particularly applies to Central Intelligence.

The first is the very understandable reason of efficiency. In any extensive and complex process like making automobiles, running a railroad or a university, governing a great commonwealth, or producing intelligence, efficiency demands a division of labor. We produce so much that we must have many people on the job. It is far more efficient to have each person become a specialist so that he does those things he is best capable of doing in order to make his contribution to the whole. Now the development of this concept of division of labor is one of the most important contributions which the American genius has given to the world of industry. It is equally applicable to the field of government and thus to CIA. We find ourselves organized into offices, divisions, branches, and desks so that we can properly take advantage of this division of labor. Unfortunately, this means that the individual who works on one small aspect of a piece of intelligence seldom gets to see the whole picture, and more than that, he seldom comes into contact with others who contribute to the same piece of intelligence. This kind of compartmentation, although it keeps us apart and keeps us from seeing things whole, also helps us to operate efficiently.

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There is another and a special reason why we are compartmented in this Agency. That is the reason of security. You have all had or will have security indoctrinations which stress the need to know. As CIA has grown, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the sort of security upon which successful intelligence depends. I mean by that, immunity from having our secrets known, not only abroad but also across the hall in an adjacent office. For security reasons, we allow an individual to know only those portions of our business which he needs to know in order to do his job effectively. Inevitably this means that we have security fences between the different parts of our Agency, security fences which again are a part of compartmentation.

Now both efficient division of labor and the maintenance of security are important and useful devices. But they can be dangerous to the ultimate attainment of our objectives if they are abused because of exclusiveness, jealousy, false pride, or thoughtlessness. Then, instead of resulting in boundary lines dictated by considerations of efficiency and security, there will be barriers hampering the speedy and effective production of intelligence. The only counter-measure that I know which can overcome the inherent disadvantages of compartmentation is coordination.

Now, coordination is a term of which you may have already heard a great deal in your experience in government and you will hear a great deal more of it as time goes on. My definition of it means simply taking into account the responsibilities and the capabilities of all those involved in any particular decision, operation, or piece of intelligence production. This has almost come to be a dogma in the intelligence community. You know, for instance, that the intelligence which CIA produces is the product not alone of its own efforts but also of the efforts of intelligence operations in other departments and agencies of the government. After some experience in intelligence before coming to CIA, and as Director of the Joint Staff, I have become convinced that there is no danger of over-emphasizing coordination. Rather we have got to stress it even more than in the past in order to achieve an effectively functioning intelligence community. This would be a community in which the resources of the whole could be geared through a process of coordination to satisfy the highest demands of policy for sound intelligence, without breaking down the boundaries which efficiency and security have erected between our agencies.

If coordination is important in the intelligence community at large, it is equally important in the specific part of the intelligence community in which you are engaged. In my experience I have seen too many instances where bureaucratic subdivisions and false conceptions of security have had the effect of hampering smooth operation of the activity, and I am determined that as rapidly as these come to light here, they will be eliminated. Without in any sense overlooking the importance of either the efficient organization of a complex operation like ours or the high importance of maintaining security between its operational units, I still insist that we keep our eye on the ultimate goal of greater and more effective contributions

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to policy makers. After all, that is why we exist, and anything which obstructs our attainment of this objective is to be avoided. Where there is a will for coordination, it will be rare indeed where a way cannot be found to effect coordination and still follow the dictates of sound security. In the final analysis there may be specific occasions when complete coordination will turn out to be incompatible with security requirements. But the burden of proof will be on the individual bypassing the particular step in the coordination process.

There is one more aspect of coordination upon which I want to say a word. That is the development of adequate coordination between what we call our customers and ourselves. Our customers, of course, are those whose policy and operating decisions demand sound intelligence. It is a self-evident fact which can escape no one in the age of commercials that the customer's wants and needs must be known to the producer and the distributor if the customer is to be adequately served. The same thing certainly applies to the field of intelligence. We must know what the policy makers want, and we must try in every way we can to see that this want is adequately met. This cannot be done in a vacuum. It can only be done as a result of close coordination between our policy makers and our intelligence producers. They must be frank with us as to what they need and we must as frankly tell them what we can do and what we cannot do. This is a two-way street, but just as we must know what the customers want, so also we are obliged in the customer's interest, of course, to do a little bit of advertising. I mean that we must convince the policy makers that sound decisions require sound intelligence and that before fundamental decisions are made, recourse should be had to the intelligence community. I trust we will always be ready to come up with a useful answer if not a perfect one. But the process is not complete, even then. If custom-built intelligence is to be the most useful, the producer of it needs to be called in by the customer to sit with him in counsel while that intelligence is being integrated with other factors to form a decision. And the fact that the Director of Central Intelligence regularly sits as an adviser to the National Security Council is a recognition of this need and is thus one of the most encouraging features of the current organizations and practices for national security.

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